



Rural Development • Housing Program • Community Facilities Direct Loan Program

## USDA Helps University Stay Competitive in the Higher Education Market

Nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in rural southeast Tennessee lies the small yet charming Tennessee Wesleyan University; a liberal arts school dedicated to providing a wide range of studies to help each student achieve their dreams.

The dedicated faculty and administration of TWU strive to provide the resources and individualized support to ensure that each student receives a quality education and obtains the proper skills needed to succeed in their careers and lives. To accomplish this, having updated campus facilities is both a necessity and priority.

TWU President Harley Knowles went to university Director of Facilities Management Mike Ingram and his staff and asked what they would fix if they had the money to make the biggest difference for the most people.

As a result, working with the Chattanooga Area Office of USDA Rural Development, the university received a \$20.6 million USDA Rural Development Community Facility Loan to construct a 30,000 square foot student life building, provide improvements to other buildings on campus, provide parking lot renovations and refinance a portion of the college's debt.

USDA RD's loan not only allows TWU to complete upgrades and repairs around campus but also allows the university to focus on the future and expand available programs and services for students in the region.

"The context of these projects is to prepare the institution for the next level of growth," Knowles said. "We are working to ensure we stay relevant in a competitive, higher education market, so we can continue to serve a wide range of students from our community and beyond."

The student life building, which will be named "Colloms Campus Center," will provide improved activity and event space, student services and student affairs staff offices. Other building improvements include roof replacement or installation of HVAC in existing buildings.

TWU is located in McMinn County, one of 53 counties in Tennessee benefiting from USDA's StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity. StrikeForce aims to increase investments in rural communities through intensive outreach and strong partnerships with community leaders, businesses, foundations and other groups that are working to combat persistent poverty.

For more information on USDA Rural Development programs available in Southeastern Tennessee contact the Chattanooga Area Office at 423-756-2239. Visit us online at [www.rd.usda.gov/TN](http://www.rd.usda.gov/TN).



*The future home of Colloms Campus Center, a 30,000 square foot student life building, will provide improved activity and event space, student services and student affairs staff offices for Tennessee Wesleyan University.*

**Obligation Amount:** \$20,600,000 Loan

**Date of Obligation:** 2/4/16

**Congressional District:** Fleischmann, 03; Senators Alexander and Corker

**Partners:** Lenders? Local Governments? Community/EcDev Orgs? Tribes?

**Demographics:** Small, liberal arts school

**Impact:** Assisting with campus and building upgrades in order for university to stay relevant in a competitive higher education market